

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

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SUBJECT: BY-ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEGINS IN QUEBEC CITY

REF: A) QUEBEC 0159, B) QUEBEC 0134, C) QUEBEC 0111, D) QUEBEC 006
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E) QUEBEC 0057, F) QUEBEC 0040

1. SUMMARY: CAMPAIGNING HAS BEGUN IN LANGELIER AND LOUIS HEBERT
RIDINGS FOR MAY 24 BYELECTION. WHILE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE WILL
PROBABLY BE DISCUSSED FREQUENTLY, MAJOR PARTIES PLAN TO EMPHASIZE
ECONOMIC ISSUES. QUEBEC'S POPULAR MAYOR GILLES LAMONTAGNE FIGURES
TO HOLD LANGELIER FOR LIBERALS. WHILE LOUIS HEBERT WILL PROBABLY STAY
LIBERAL AS WELL, CONSERVATIVES COULD MAKE REAL RACE UTILIZING SUPPORT
FROM INDIVIDUAL PEQUISTE WORKERS. CHANCES OF A STRONG CONSERVATIVE
SHOWING WERE INCREASED APRIL 25 WHEN POPULAR QUEZEC JUDGE ROBERT
CLICHE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT BE NDP CANDIDATE
IN RIDING. CLICHE MIGHT HAVE WELL CARRIED THE DISTRICT FOR NDP.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE MAY 24 FEDERAL BYELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN THE TWO RIDINGS IN
OUR CONSULAR DISTRICT ARE BEGINNING TO PICK UP A SMALL AMOUNT OF
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STEAM. PRE-CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY HAS FEATURED VISITS FROM JOE CLARK
WHO IS TRYING HARD TO ESTABLISH AN IMAGE HERE AND PIERRE TRUDEAU WHO
ALREADY HAS ONE. AFTER THEIR VISITS AND THE FREQUENT PRESENCE OF URBA
N

AFFAIRS MINISTER ANDRE OUELLET WHO IS SUPERVISING THE TWO RIDINGS
FOR LIBERALS AND QUEBEC WING LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARY LEADER MARC
LALONDE, MAJOR CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN NAMED, PAID THEIR DEPOSITS, AND B

EEN

REGISTERED. BOTH CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS HERE EXPECT FREQUENT VISITS FROM THEIR NATIONAL LEADERS INCLUDING ANOTHER ONE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. WHILE BOTH MAJOR PARTIES EXPECT THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE TO BE DISCUSSED FREQUENTLY DURING THE CAMPAIGN, THEY PLAN TO EMPHASIZE ECONOMIC ISSUES SUCH AS HOUSING, UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION AND OTHER BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES. ALTHOUGH NUMBER OF SEATS AT STAKE AND SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN POLITICAL SITUATION FOLLOWING ELECTION OF PQ IN QUEBEC HAVE MADE MAY 24 BYELECTIONS MORE IMPORTANT THAN USUAL, IT APPEARS THAT LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES WILL STILL DETERMINE OUTCOMES IN LOUIS HEBERT AND LANGELIER RIDINGS.

3. QUEBEC CITY'S POPULAR MAYOR GILLES LAMONTAGNE IS RUNNING AS THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE IN THE RIDING OF LANGELIER WHICH WAS ONCE JEAN MARCHAND'S FIEFDOM (REF C). MARCHAND WON RIDING BY 10,000 VOTE MARGIN IN 1974 AND 8600 IN 1972. THIS PREDOMINANTLY WORKING CLASS DISTRICT HAS 34,000 VOTERS. PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE MAURICE HAMEL, A LOCAL MERCHANT, IS A COLORLESS CANDIDATE KNOWN ONLY BECAUSE HIS FATHER WAS ONCE A POPULAR MAYOR OF QUEBEC. CREDITISTE CANDIDATE SAUVEUR FRADETTE IS ALSO UNKNOWN BUT HAS SOME RESIDUAL STRENGTH AS HIS PARTY'S CANDIDATE FINISHED SECOND IN RIDING WITH 3,339 VOTES IN 1974. NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND COMMUNIST PARTY ALSO HAVE CANDIDATES ENTERED WITH TWO LOCAL INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES COMPLETING THE LIST.

4. HAMEL INTENDS CONTEST RIDING BY ATTACKING TRUDEAU ECONOMIC RECORD-
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WITH HELP OF VISITS FROM NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS--AND AN EXTENSIVE DOOR TO DOOR CAMPAIGN. HE HOPES TO DEVELOP STRENGTH AT "GRASS ROOTS" BASED ON HIS LONG-TIME RESIDENCY IN THE RIDING. HAMEL HAS ALSO HAD SOME HARSH WORDS ON THE MAYOR'S HANDLING OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS. LAMONTAGNE WILL COUNTER WITH A SIMILARLY STRUCTURED CAMPAIGN BASED ON PERSONAL MEETINGS, KOFFEEKLATCHES, AND VISITS TO SMALL GROUPS. HE DOES NOT INTEND TO HOLD LARGE-SCALE MEETINGS. LAMONTAGNE'S MAIN ASSETS ARE HIS PRESTIGE, HIS CITY MACHINE, AND THE LIBERAL PARTY MACHINE. WHILE THERE IS SOME UNHAPPINESS IN THIS POORER PART OF TOWN WITH HIS RECORD IN CITY HALL, THE MAYOR IS STILL EXPECTED TO WIN HANDILY. OBSERVERS HAVE REPORTED SOME INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT FROM PEQUISTES IN THE REGION FOR HAMEL IN ORDER EMBARRASS LIBERALS BUT LOCAL ANALYSTS FEEL THAT--AT BEST--SUCH SUPPORT WILL ONLY LIMIT SIZE OF LAMONTAGNE'S MAJORITY.

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5. LOUIS HEBERT RIDING FIGURES TO BE A MORE EXCITING RACE. IN 1974, LATE LIBERAL DEPUTY ALBANIE MORIN MASSACRED OPPOSITION WITH 32,441 VOTES, NDP FINISHING SECOND WITH 6,829, AND PC A POOR THIRD WITH 5,201. HOWEVER, AS DETAILED IN REF E, CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY IN LOUIS HEBERT AND PREVIOUS MAJORITIES HAVE LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE. WHEREAS A CANDIDATE OF LAMONTAGNE'S STATURE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD LANGELIER EASILY, LIBERALS IN LOUIS HEBERT NOMINATED 27 YEAR OLD DENNIS DAWSON--CHAIRMAN OF QUEBEC CITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMISSION. ALTHOUGH POPULAR, HE MAY BE HARD PRESSED IN THE ELECTION. HE IS HAVING DIFFICULTY WITH LIBERAL MACHINE AFTER DEFEATING THEIR CANDIDATE AT CONVENTION. DEFEATED CANDIDATE HAS WITHDRAWN HIS THREAT TO RUN AS INDEPENDENT (REF B) BUT CONTINUING LUKEWARM SUPPORT OF LIBERAL MACHINE IS FACTOR MAKING THE RACE LOOK CLOSED THAN ONCE EXPECTED. SOME TORIES ARE EXPRESSING GUARDED OPTIMISM THAT THEY CAN STUN LIBERALS WITH THEIR 36 YEAR OLD CANDIDATE, JEAN LAVOIE, MUNICIPAL RECREATION DIRECTOR OF STE. FOY. THEY PIN THEIR HOPES ON PQ SUPPORTERS VOTING CONSERVATIVE TO DEAL A BLOW TO LIBERALS. LOUIS HEBERT INCLUDES BOTH PROVINCIAL DISTRICT OF JEAN TALON WHERE PROVINCIAL LIBERAL RAYMOND GARNEAU WAS EASILY REELECTED AND LOUIS HEBERT WHERE PQ CLAUDE MORIN WON RESOUNDING VICTORY IN LAST PROVINCIAL ELECTION. WHILE WE HAVE HEARD OF SOME CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY BY INDIVIDUAL

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PEQUISTES FOR CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE, IT STILL APPEARS THAT LIBERALS WILL HOLD SEAT. PEQUISTES HAVE NO OVERT BACKING FROM THEIR

PARTY AND 40 PERCENT OF RIDING CONSISTS OF BUSINESS-ORIENTED, SUBURBAN SILLERY WHOSE VOTERS LESS LIKELY PARTICIPATE IN ATTEMPT EMBARRASS LIBERALS.

6. CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN IN LOUIS HEBERT RECEIVED A BOOST, OF SORTS, APRIL 25 WHEN THE VERY POPULAR JUDGE ROBERT CLICHE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT BE THE NDP CANDIDATE THERE ON MAY 24. CLICHE IS SAID TO HAVE COME WITHIN AN INCH OF ACCEPTING CANDIDACY. HAD HE DONE SO, HE MIGHT WELL HAVE WON THE SEAT (NDP HAS NEVER WON A SEAT IN QUEBEC PROVINCE). AS IT STANDS NOW, FOR EVERY PQ SUPPORTER WHO MIGHT BE TEMPTED VOTE PC, ANOTHER WILL REFUSE VOTE FOR RIGHT-OF-CENTER PARTY WHOSE LEADER HAS FAILED TO EXCLUDE ARMED RESPONSE TO QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE. JUDGE CLICHE WOULD HAVE PRESENTED NO SUCH PROBLEM FOR THEM. MANY PQ VOTERS IN AND AROUND LAVAL UNIVERSITY FAVOR NDP FOR SOCIAL/ECONOMIC REASONS. CLICHE COULD PROBABLY HAVE SWEEPED MOST OF THE REMAINING NATIONALIST VOTE (SEE REF A) AND PICKED UP MANY MODERATE TO CONSERVATIVE VOTERS WHO ADMIRE HIS HANDLING OF 1975 COMMISSION INVESTIGATING LABOR UNION VIOLENCE. HIS SHUNNING OF NDP LABEL LEAVES THAT PARTY WITHOUT CANDIDATE FOR THE MOMENT AND LEAVES PC WITH HOPE THAT THEY CAN USE PEQUISTE SYMPATHIZERS TO EFFECT WHAT MUST STILL BE CONSIDERED AN UNEXPECTED VICTORY.
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